GODWIN JESCHAL, *Politik und Wissenschaft deutscher Aerzte im Ersten Weltkrieg*, (Würzburger Medizinhistorische Forschungen, Band 13), Pattensen/Han., Horst Wellm Verlag, 1980, 8vo, pp. 169, DM. 26.00 (paperback).

This doctoral thesis from Berlin tells the old and unedifying story of how the leaders of the German medical profession followed their imperialist government in supporting the 1914–18 war inside and outside the Reich. The author illustrates this additionally by examining their attitude towards gas-warfare, nutrition, and abortion. For him this is the necessary consequence of the economic "bourgeois" condition of the German doctors. The author omits two basic facts: (1) this attitude was practised just the same by the leaders of the French and English profession; (2) this imperialistic attitude is practised today, even in peace-time, in those countries, where the bourgeoisie has been exterminated. This makes it obvious that in spite of the author's industry in collecting material, this is no scientific monograph but a political pamphlet, a fact which is anyhow obvious from the blind reliance on material from the so-called "German Democratic Republic", and the terminology and the general philosophy of the opus. You can call this science, if you want to, but as Friedrich Engels once wrote, "You can classify a clothesbrush as a mammal, but that doesn't make it grow mammae". By the way, S. Grumbach, whom Jeschal quotes repeatedly, as a "Swiss", was no Swiss, but a French socialist deputy.

Erwin H. Ackerknecht
Medizinhistorisches Institut der Universität Zürich

P. H. SYDENHAM, *Measuring instruments: tools of knowledge and control*, London, Peter Peregrinus (in association with the Science Museum), 1979, 8vo, pp. xvii, 512, illus., £19.00 (overseas £22.00).

It is hard to be generous about this book, which begins with two chapters of total gobbledegook. In his endeavour to construct what he calls a philosophy of measurement the author does nothing so much as add verses to *Jabberwocky*. On page 2 we learn "measuring instruments ... [are] ... tools for converting information into knowledge". By page 18 we have also discovered "knowledge ... [is] ... information that has been given a certain meaning by the observer", and on page 20 we are told "the meaning of measurements would seem to remain a property subjectively tied to the mind of the observer". All of which leads to the conclusion "that measuring instruments are information machines that convey and code with meaning, knowledge sought" (p. 20). Reference back to page 2 should make this clear, "there is a great difference of opinion on what knowledge is". An aphorism that can only be helpful by the time we get to page 26 "Science is the study of gaining knowledge and ordering it in its most general form so as to reduce the number of individual facts needed to be known". By page 28 a Zen-like "known body of knowledge" has crept into the text. After this the solidity of page 38 is something of a relief: "The sum total of knowledge is termed the body of knowledge". This body of knowledge grows through technology: "If the equipment and method is better than those that preceded it, it must reveal new knowledge" and so, the author notes conclusively, "It provides a journey into the unknown where all manner of hitherto unknown phenomena exist" (p. 49).

After this gnomic beginning and the oracular "Man can only create what can be